

Washington, DC -- On Thursday, January 18, Joe Sestak reaffirmed his support of the V-22 Osprey in light of a report released today by the Center for Defense Information, an organization known to frequently criticize the spending priorities of the Department of Defense, questioning the readiness of the V-22 Osprey for combat.

“I was in the Pentagon responsible for the procurement of the V-22 Osprey when the final review was made by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Operational Test and Evaluation Directorate (DOT&E), which objectively looked at the safety issue. And because of that review process, I fully support usage of the V-22 Osprey.

“There is always friction in war, and this platform was built to best survive such conflict after having gone through the best review process the Department of Defense has to determine if it's ready, objectively overseen by the DOT&E. The V-22 Osprey was built to be used in combat operations and that is precisely what we should do.”

The V-22 possesses transformational capabilities held by no other platform while not being constrained by many of the typical limitations – such as range or speed –encountered by helicopters. Senior Defense officials have asserted that the over-horizon capabilities of the V-22 would have helped in the invasion of Afghanistan.

For example, the Lieutenant General who led the Marines during the invasion of Afghanistan has said that if the Marines had had the Osprey for the invasion: “I wouldn't have stopped at [Camp] Rhino going after the Taliban”... we would have gone “straight into Kandahar and collapsed them a month-and-a-half earlier, and created even more a sense of despair on them,” [Inside the Navy, August 29, 2005].

The Center for Defense Information's report compiles information from existing studies on the Osprey and purportedly attempts to assess its combat readiness based on this second-hand analysis. As a result, the report functions more as a compilation of existing criticisms of the Osprey – which have been addressed or considered during testing of the platform – rather than shedding new light on its readiness or potential effectiveness in combat.

Some of the claims made by the report include:

- Claim: The Osprey suffers from increased susceptibility to ground fire because of the operational limitations placed on it in order to avoid Vortex Ring State - a condition caused when a rotor (or rotorprop in the case of the V-22) encounters its own downwash when the aircraft descends too quickly at too low a speed, potentially leading to a significant loss of lift.

Response: The report of the DOT&E OPEVAL Phase II tests (OT-IIG) clearly states that the VRS "envelope for the V-22 is now well defined and avoidable... [and during testing] aircrews accomplished all operational missions while remaining outside the VRS-susceptible envelope and pilots are trained regarding its dangers."

This assertion made by the CDI report also stands in contrast to the recent comments by the Department of Defense pointing out that the "V-22 can come into a landing zone faster than any helicopter we have in our inventory" and that it is less likely than any other rotorcraft to be subjected to vortex ring state and more likely to recover safely if it does [McClatchy – Tribune Information Services, 12/28/06]. Even Philip Coyle, a senior adviser to the Center for Defense Information has said about VRS and the Osprey: "[the Marines] are handling that problem and have done quite a number of tests to understand the conditions under which it occurs. The pilots are well-informed about it" [McClatchy – Tribune Information Services, 12/28/06].

- Claim: The report suggests that the Osprey's supposed susceptibility to VRS is a product of the fundamental design characteristics of the rotorcraft – namely its dual-mode flight capability.

Response: The belief that tilt-rotor technology is inherently flawed has been dismissed by both the Blue Ribbon panel formed by then-Secretary of Defense William Cohen and a NASA-led review of the V-22 program.

- Claim: The Osprey is hurt by a poorly designed hydraulic system whose lines are susceptible to chafing and leakage.

Response: Following redesign of the hydraulic system DOT&E testing found no problems

in over 5,000 flight hours "providing confidence that the current hydraulic system is safe to operate."

For other questions regarding the contents of the report or the status of the V-22, please feel free to contact Congressman Sestak's Washington DC office at 202-225-2011.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "DeepBlue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.*

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